

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, and 5-20 are pending in the present application. Claims 1, 7, 11 and 13 are independent.

The claims have been amended to clarify the invention according to U.S. patent practice. These modifications are fully supported by the original disclosure, e.g., page 9, lines 21-22 of the specification.

Personal Interview Conducted

Applicants appreciate the Examiner for the personal interview conducted with Applicants' representative on January 25, 2007 and for the Interview Summary. The above amendments to independent claims 1, 7 and 13 have been discussed during the interview and the Examiner tentatively agreed that these amendments overcome the below prior art rejections (see the Interview Summary). Accordingly, the indication of allowance of claims 1, 7 and 13 and their dependent claims 2-3, 5-6, 8-10, 12, 14-18 and 20 is respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication that claims 11 and 19 are allowed over the prior art of record.

Claim 10 has been objected to as being dependent upon a rejected claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Dependent claim 10 has not been rewritten in independent form at this time, but Applicants reserve the right to rewrite previously- objected-to claim 10 in independent form if desired, without the current amendment to claim 7.

35 U.S.C. § 103 Rejection

Claims 1, 6, 8, 14 and 16 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ikemure, Abe, and Shimomura in view of Werth et al. Claims 2-3, 5 and 17

have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ikemure, Abe, Shimomura and Werth et al. as applied to the above claims, and further in view of Syeda-Mahmood. Claim 12 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ikemure, Abe, Shimomura, and Werth et al. as applied to claims 1, 4, 6, 8, 14 and 16 above, and further in view of Takahashi. Claim 15 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ikemure, Abe, Shimomura, and Werth et al. as applied to claims 1, 4, 6, 8, 14 and 16 above and further in view of Casey et al. Claims 7, 9, 13, 18 and 20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ikemure, Abe, and Shimomura in view of Tanaka et al. These rejections, insofar as they pertain to the presently pending claims, are respectfully traversed.

As discussed above, without acquiescing to any of the Examiner's allegations made to reject these claims but to merely advance prosecution, independent claims 1, 7 and 13 have been amended to further emphasize the distinguishing features of the invention over the combinations of references applied by the Examiner, as discussed during the interview. Accordingly, independent claims 1, 7 and 13 and their dependent claims (due to their dependency) are patentable over the applied references, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons and in view of the above clarifying amendments, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw all of the objections and rejections of record, and to provide an early issuance of a Notice of Allowance.

Should there be any outstanding matters which need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Esther H. Chong (Registration No. 40,953) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.


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Amendment dated February 20, 2007 with RCE
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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and further replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

By 
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